

the condition of education 2006



INDICATOR 35

Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2006*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2006*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.sap?pubid=2006071>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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Learning Opportunities

Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Student/teacher ratios tend to be higher in public schools with larger enrollments than in public schools with smaller enrollments.

The ratio of students to teachers, which is frequently used as a proxy measure for class size,¹ declined from 17.6 students per teacher in 1990 to 16.5 in 2003 for all regular² public elementary, secondary, and combined schools (see supplemental table 35-1). The patterns are different, however, when public elementary, secondary, and combined schools are examined separately.

As with all regular public schools, the student/teacher ratio for regular public elementary schools declined between 1990 and 2003 (from 18.2 to 16.3), with most of the decline occurring after 1995. Generally, elementary schools in each enrollment category showed similar patterns except in the largest schools (1,500 students or greater), where the student/teacher ratio increased from 19.9 to 20.8 students per teacher.

In contrast, student/teacher ratios for all regular public secondary schools increased between 1990 and 1995 (from 16.7 to 17.7) and then declined to 17.0 in 2003. Secondary schools in each enrollment category showed similar patterns.

In regular public combined schools (that include both elementary and secondary grades), student/teacher ratios were about the same in 2003 as in 1990. When examined by enrollment category, the student/teacher ratios for all but the largest schools in 2003 were similar to the ratio in 1990 or had declined. The student/teacher ratio for the largest schools increased from 19.0 in 1990 to 20.8 in 2003.

In every year from 1990 through 2003, the student/teacher ratio was positively associated with the enrollment for elementary, secondary, and combined regular public schools; the student/teacher ratio for any given enrollment category was always larger than that of any smaller enrollment category. For example, in 2003, regular elementary schools with over 1,500 students enrolled 6.9 more students per teacher, on average, than regular elementary schools with enrollments under 300. During this period, the gap between the student/teacher ratios for the largest and smallest schools grew for elementary (from 3.9 to 6.9) and combined regular public schools (from 8.1 to 9.5).

¹ Student/teacher ratios do not provide a direct measure of class size because they are based on the amount of time in full-time equivalents that all teachers in a school spend instructing students. These teachers include classroom teachers; prekindergarten teachers in some elementary schools; art, music, and physical education teachers; and teachers who do not teach regular classes every period of the day.

² Regular schools include all schools except special education schools, vocational schools, and alternative schools.

NOTE: The student/teacher ratio is determined by dividing the total number of full-time-equivalent teachers into the total enrollment. This analysis excludes schools that did not report both enrollment and teacher data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, The NCES Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 1990–91 through 2003–04, previously unpublished tabulations (July and August 2005).

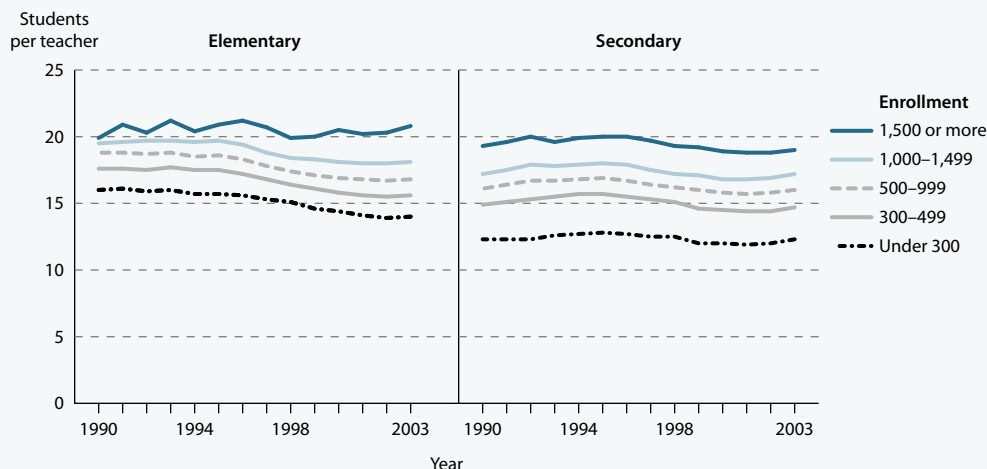
FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Supplemental Note 3

Supplemental Table 35-1



STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: Student/teacher ratios in regular public elementary and secondary schools, by level and enrollment of school: Fall 1990–2003



Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Table 35-1. Student/teacher ratios in public schools, by type, level, and enrollment of school: Fall 1990–2003

Type, level, and enrollment of school	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
All schools	17.4	17.6	17.7	17.8	17.7	17.8	17.6	17.2	16.9	16.6	16.4	16.3	16.2	16.4
Regular schools	17.6	17.7	17.8	17.9	17.8	17.9	17.7	17.3	17.0	16.7	16.5	16.4	16.3	16.5
Elementary schools	18.2	18.2	18.1	18.3	18.0	18.1	17.9	17.4	17.0	16.7	16.5	16.3	16.2	16.3
Under 300	16.0	16.1	15.9	16.0	15.7	15.7	15.6	15.3	15.1	14.6	14.4	14.1	13.9	14.0
300–499	17.6	17.6	17.5	17.7	17.5	17.5	17.2	16.8	16.4	16.1	15.8	15.6	15.5	15.6
500–999	18.8	18.8	18.7	18.8	18.5	18.6	18.3	17.8	17.4	17.1	16.9	16.8	16.7	16.8
1,000–1,499	19.5	19.6	19.7	19.7	19.6	19.7	19.4	18.8	18.4	18.3	18.1	18.0	18.0	18.1
1,500 or more	19.9	20.9	20.3	21.2	20.4	20.9	21.2	20.7	19.9	20.0	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.8
Secondary schools	16.7	17.0	17.4	17.4	17.6	17.7	17.6	17.4	17.1	16.9	16.7	16.7	16.8	17.0
Under 300	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.6	12.7	12.8	12.7	12.5	12.5	12.0	12.0	11.9	12.0	12.3
300–499	14.9	15.1	15.3	15.5	15.7	15.7	15.5	15.3	15.1	14.6	14.5	14.4	14.4	14.7
500–999	16.1	16.4	16.7	16.7	16.8	16.9	16.7	16.4	16.2	16.0	15.8	15.7	15.8	16.0
1,000–1,499	17.2	17.5	17.9	17.8	17.9	18.0	17.9	17.5	17.2	17.1	16.8	16.8	16.9	17.2
1,500 or more	19.3	19.6	20.0	19.6	19.9	20.0	20.0	19.7	19.3	19.2	18.9	18.8	18.8	19.0
Combined schools	15.8	16.1	15.8	16.1	16.1	16.0	15.7	15.3	14.6	14.4	14.9	15.0	15.2	15.6
Under 300	11.0	11.2	10.9	11.2	11.3	10.3	10.0	9.7	10.4	10.3	10.4	10.6	10.8	11.3
300–499	14.8	14.7	14.5	14.9	14.4	15.0	14.6	14.5	14.1	14.1	13.9	14.0	14.1	14.8
500–999	16.7	17.0	15.8	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.6	16.2	15.6	15.0	15.9	15.9	16.2	16.2
1,000–1,499	17.8	18.1	18.5	18.3	18.1	18.2	17.9	17.5	17.2	17.2	17.6	17.9	18.1	17.8
1,500 or more	19.0	19.5	19.8	19.6	20.0	20.0	19.6	19.3	18.9	21.0	20.0	21.1	20.7	20.8
Alternative	14.2	15.8	16.5	17.4	18.0	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.4	15.8	15.2	14.9	14.9	15.0
Special education	6.5	6.8	7.0	7.4	6.9	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.3	7.2	7.0	6.4	7.0	7.3
Vocational	13.0	12.3	13.0	13.1	12.9	12.7	12.9	12.9	13.1	13.0	12.7	12.7	9.9	10.3

NOTE: The student/teacher ratio is determined by dividing the total number of full-time-equivalent teachers into the total enrollment. Regular schools include all schools except special education schools, vocational schools, and alternative schools. This analysis excludes schools that did not report both enrollment and teacher data. See *supplemental note 3* for more information about the NCES Common Core of Data (CCD).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, The NCES Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 1990–91 through 2003–04, previously unpublished tabulations (July and August 2005).